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THE OF
SOUL AND
JOY PHOTO
COLLECTIVE

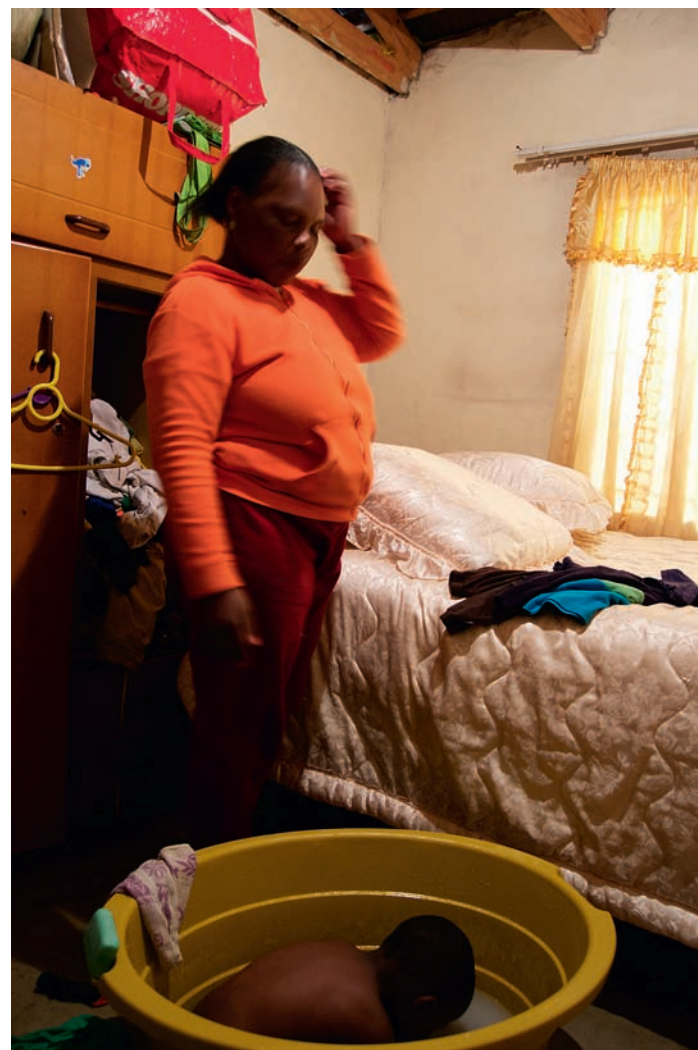


BONGIWE ZUNGU

BONGIWE ZUNGU

With Love, Mom















BIOGRAPHY

Bongiwe Zungu was born in 1999 in Thokoza, South Africa. In 2015, she was introduced to photography through the *Of Soul and Joy* project initiated by the Rubis Mécénat cultural fund and Easigas. In October 2016, Zungu showcased her work at the *Of Soul & Joy Photo Fest edition 2* organised in Thokoza.

WITH LOVE, MOM

If you look up the meaning of the word “mother” in a dictionary of any language, you are likely to come across these descriptive terms: nurture, unconditional love, warmth, affection and care. Most of the time, the word “mother” refers to a woman who has been given birth to a child. While the latter may be true, the role of the mother is sometimes fulfilled by women who have not given birth to a child themselves, but whom we nevertheless regard as mothers.

With Love, Mom, captures the daily acts of mothering, specifically of young children.

OF SOUL AND JOY PROJECT

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Bongiwe Zungu joined the project in 2015.

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CELIMPILO MAZIBUKO

CELIMPILO MAZIBUKO

In Jus'this















BIOGRAPHY

Celimpilo Mazibuko was born in 1996 in Natalspruit and grew up in Palm Ridge, Germiston, South Africa. He studied visual art at school where his love of photography and art began. Since 2012 he has devoted all of his time to photography.

In 2012 he entered the *Of Soul and Joy* project in Thokoza. In 2013 he was featured in a group exhibition at the Ithuba Art Gallery in Johannesburg. His work was also featured in numerous group exhibitions including the Addis Foto Festival in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (2014), the F-stop Magazine (2015) and the Turbine Art Fair in Johannesburg. Mazibuko has studied photography at The Market Photo Workshop and he also completed Photojournalism and Documentary Photography Programme at the same institution. He is the 2016 Tierney Fellowship recipient mentored by the photographer Cedric Nunn.

IN JUSTHIS

In Jus'this is a photographic documentary project that confronts land injustice by considering human settlement in South African townships, particularly in relation to post-1994 urban planning and township development that has occurred through the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). Mazibuko's focus is on documenting "development" in his community, Palm Ridge, Katlehong, through personal experiences of human settlement and spatial constraints, questioning the reach of this housing policy in the daily lives of residents.

The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was introduced in 1994 after the first democratic elections took place. The fundamental implementation of this economic policy was to alleviate poverty amongst black townships and "previously disadvantaged" individuals by providing free service delivery such as low cost houses, electricity and running water. While the RDP did not last, the term has been used to apply particularly to low cost housing developments from 1994 to the present.

In Mazibuko's case, he was born and raised in the informal settlement of Tsietsi, near Katlehong, on the East Rand of Johannesburg. After 20 years in Tsietsi, his family was notified that there was a space identified in Palm Ridge, Katlehong for low cost housing developments for most of his community to inhabit. For Mazibuko, "RDP" houses and settlements have become new ways of breaking up communities. As with the experience of his family, moving meant relationships that had been nurtured over 20 years with neighbours come to an end as families move into new spaces and find themselves moving in with other families with similar backgrounds and from other areas.

In Jus'this series was produced within the frame of the 2016 Tierney Fellowship at the Market Photo Workshop.

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Celimpilo Mazibuko joined the project in 2012.

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CELIMPILO MAZIBUKO

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JABULILE PEARL HLANZE

JABULILE PEARL HLANZE

Somhlolo Ebhuqwini
“Dusty Land”















BIOGRAPHY

Jabulile Pearl Hlanze was born in 1981 in Thokoza, Johannesburg, South Africa. She was introduced to photography through the Market Photo Workshop and joined the *Of Soul and Joy* project in 2016. Hlanze participated in the *Of Soul & Joy Photo Fest edition 2* in Thokoza. This is where she exhibited her project titled *Somhlolo Ebhuqwini*.

SOMHLOLO EBHUQWINI

“DUSTY LAND”

The name of this project is *Somhlolo Ebhuqwini*, which means “dusty lands”. It focuses on the oldest and largest soccer ground in the East Rand of Johannesburg, Somhlolo Grounds. The project is a snapshot of my visual journey within the space of Somhlolo Grounds along with the many characters that make up the narrative. It is the story of celebration and of hope. Somhlolo Grounds is characterised by the people from Katlehong Township in the East Rand, who pass by on the way to their daily activities or for leisure. In this place, you observe new love birds discovering each other, a pensioner on the way to the market or young lads playing games. There are always different activities going on depending on the time of the day or the year. This includes everything from a group of drunk construction workers to a heated soccer match between two teams from the community. Other people take selfies or pictures of the ground that they post on social media.

These grounds have carried children through to their adulthood for many years. It has carried dreams, voter's aspirations, fears, messages, love and hope. If these grounds could speak, it would tell endless stories of men and women who have lived their lives along with the dust of Somhlolo. It is but a fraction of this sensational mystery that is captured in the images of this project.

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Jabulile Pearl Hlanze joined the project in 2016.

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JABULILE PEARL HLANZE

Somhlolo Ebhuqwini

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LINDOKUHLE SOBEKWA

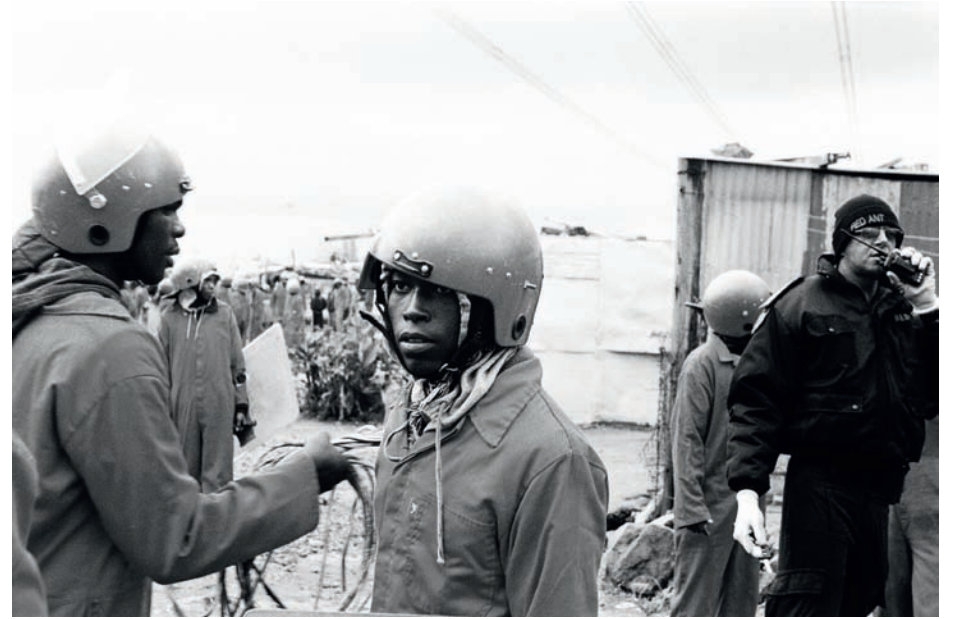
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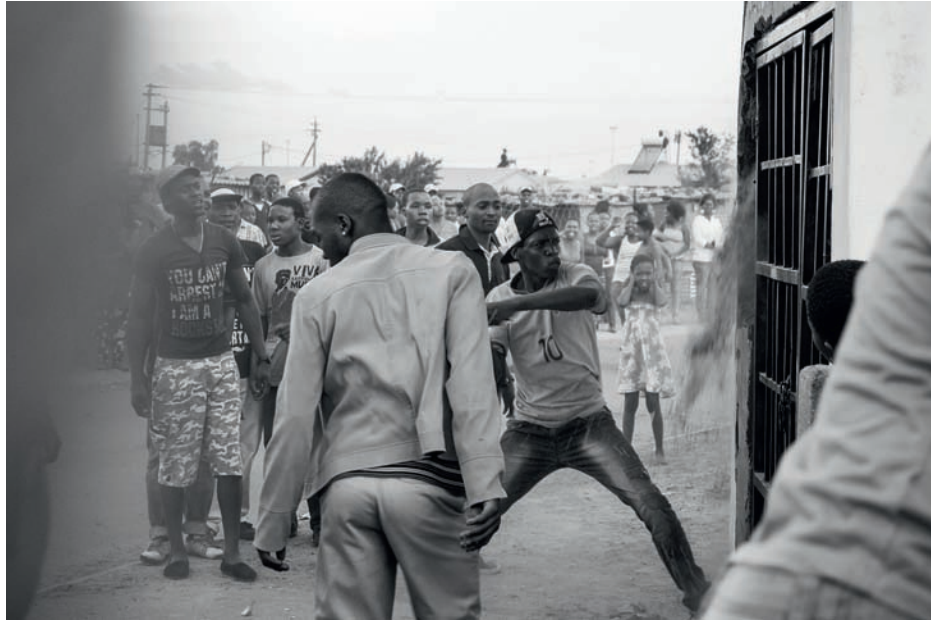
A Place of Peace















BIOGRAPHY

Lindokuhle Sobekwa was born in Katlehong, Johannesburg, South Africa, in 1995. He currently lives in Thokoza. He was introduced to photography as a high school student through the *Of Soul and Joy* project in 2012. In 2013, Sobekwa was a part of the group show *In Thokoza*, organised by Rubis Mécénat at the Ithuba Arts Gallery in Johannesburg.

He joined *Live* magazine as a part time photographer. His work has been exhibited at the Kalashnikovv Gallery in South Africa and, through the No Man's Art Gallery, in the Netherlands, South Africa, Norway and Iran.

In 2015, his series *Nyaope* was exhibited in the group show *Free from my Happiness* at the Ghent International Photo Festival in Belgium.

During 2016, *Free from my Happiness* was further exposed in Perignem in Berneem, Belgium and at the Johannesburg Art Gallery in South Africa. The same year he took part in the group show *Fresh Produce* organised by Assemblages and VANSA at the Turbine Art Fair in Johannesburg, South Africa.

He is the recipient of the 2017 *Magnum Photography and Social Justice Fellowship*.

Sobekwa is also the assistant of the *Of Soul and Joy* Project Manager Jabulani Dhlamini, and is working as an apprentice at Mikhael Subotzky's photo studio.

A PLACE OF PEACE

Thokoza was the first black township to be established in the early 1950's in the East Rand of Johannesburg, South Africa. The new township was named Thokoza, meaning "place of peace". During the early 1990's, Thokoza was the stage for a rival conflict between the two main political parties of the time, the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). Approximately 3000 people died in clashes between the two groups.

I grew up in Phola Park, a place which is predominated by conservative Xhosa lower-class. In the early nineties, Phola Park was an informal settlement with a high density of shacks and an absence of established community structures, and therefore an easy target for attacks.

For me, Phola Park is a unique part of Thokoza. Although its inhabitants have suffered in the past, and still suffer today, the place has kept its soul and its residents an optimism about the future.

I have been documenting the public and private realms of Phola Park ever since I got introduced to photography. I have witnessed a wide range of human feelings and behaviors: love, despair, lust, unity, pain, friendship, empathy, conflict, betrayal and forgiveness. However, Phola Park is united by a sense of belonging, as if we all are a part of the same family.

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Lindokuhle Sobekwa joined the project in 2012.

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LINDOKUHLE SOBEKWA

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LITHA KANDA

LITHA KANDA

Home away from Home















BIOGRAPHY

Litha Kanda was born in 1998 in Umtata Eastern Cape, South Africa. He currently lives in Thokoza. In 2014, he was introduced to photography through the *Of Soul and Joy* project. The same year, Kanda participated in the *Of Soul & Joy Photo Fest edition 2* in Thokoza. This is where he exhibited his first project titled *Home away from Home*.

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

My project is titled *Home away from Home*.

“Home” refers to a place where we live permanently.

This project is about my move from a rural environment in the Eastern Cape versus my current urban environment in Thokoza. My “urban home” is very different from my original rural village. In rural environments, one is always surrounded by the mountains and livestock such as cattle, goats and sheep, while the city is dominated by buildings and street lights.

While I photograph the landscapes of the city, I search for similarities with my rural home, but it is hard to find any common factors.

Interestingly, I have observed that people who come from rural areas and settle in the city try to keep some kind of livestock in the city. This is mostly limited to goats and sheep, but sometimes they even acquire cows and find grazing land close to their city homes.

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Litha Kanda joined the project in 2014.

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LITHA KANDA

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LUNATHI MNGXUMA

LUNATHI MNGXUMA

Urban Farming















BIOGRAPHY

Lunathi Mngxuma was born in 1995 in Lady Frere in Eastern Cape, South Africa. He currently lives in Thokoza. In 2016, he was introduced to photography through the *Of Soul and Joy* project.

URBAN FARMING

In my work *Urban Farming*, I am focusing on how people earn a living with their animals and plants.

Urban farming is the practice of cultivating, processing and distributing food around a town or a city.

I got interested in this topic because of the evolution of farming and the impact of commercialisation on its practices.

I grew up herding cattle in Eastern Cape. For me, farming is not just how people make a living and provide food, it also allows for the creation of job opportunities in a community and provides a large amount of food at relatively low costs.

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Lunathi Mngxuma joined the project in 2016.

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LUNATHI MNGXUMA

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MPHO MARY GORRETY MATIA

MPHO MARY GORRETY MATIA

One Day at a Time















BIOGRAPHY

Mpho Mary Gorrety Matia was born in 1999 in Ladybrand, Lesotho. She later moved to Thokoza in South Africa to pursue her primary and secondary schooling. In 2016, she was introduced to photography through the *Of Soul and Joy* project initiated by the Rubis Mécénat cultural fund and Easigas. Matia describes her introduction to photography as “love at first shot”. In October 2016, Matia was part of the *Of Soul & Joy Photo Fest edition 2* in Thokoza.

ONE DAY AT A TIME

As human beings, we are all susceptible to illness. These illnesses can either be physical or psychological, or a combination of both. Sometimes these conditions may be temporary while others can be chronic or terminal.

My body of work titled *One Day at a Time* focuses on the lives of people living with various medical conditions ranging from diabetes to cancer. I captured moments from their everyday life, their medical treatment and the support they received from their family members. Some of these persons lived far from their biological families and relied on friends to administer medication and basic care.

This is a very intimate piece of work. I initially struggled with the emotions evoked while photographing, but I later accepted it as a part of my own healing.

Living with a medical condition can be strenuous, especially when there is a lack of solid support structures.

This project reaffirmed my believe that love, support, and care are a crucial parts of healing for persons living with medical conditions.

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Mpho Mary Gorrety Matia joined the project in 2016.

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MPHO MARY GORRETY MATIA

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NTHABISENG MANUEL

NTHABISENG MANUEL

Teenage Pregnancy















BIOGRAPHY

Nthabiseng Manuel was born in 1999 in Thokoza, Johannesburg, South Africa. In 2016 she was introduced to photography through the *Of Soul and Joy* project. Manuel participated in the *Of Soul & Joy Photo Fest edition 2* in Thokoza. This is where she exhibited her first project titled *Teenage Pregnancy*.

TEENAGE PREGNANCY

Teenage Pregnancy refers to the pregnancy of women under the age of 20. I chose this theme because of the steady rising number of pregnant teenage girls across the world and in my country, which is a major concern.

As a teenager myself, I am curious about the kind of challenges these young mothers are facing, and the serious impact that a pregnancy will have on their future. In this project, I had the privilege to follow a friend of mine who had to drop out of school because of her pregnancy.

The reasons behind teenage pregnancies include infatuation, rape, drugs, poverty, molestation, incest, experimentation, exploitation and transactional sex.

I consider the pregnancy as something that robs the young girls of their innocence and their development. In my community, pregnant teenagers tend to be stigmatized and left out alone with their children.

Through my camera lenses, I capture the boldness of the young mothers and their unfeigned love for their unborn children. I see the glitter of light in the hopeful eyes of the young mothers, who are facing many challenges beyond the birth of their children. This project has taught me a lot about the struggles of being a teenage mother.

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Nthabiseng Manuel joined the project in 2016.

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NTHABISENG MANUEL

Teenage Pregnancy

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PHUMZILE DZIMBIRI

PHUMZILE DZIMBIRI

Ukungabikhona
"Absence"















BIOGRAPHY

Phumzile Dzimbiri was born in 1999 in Thokoza, South Africa. She was introduced to photography through the *Of Soul and Joy* project, initiated by the Rubis Mécénat cultural fund and Easigas, as a student at Buhlebuzile secondary school in early 2015. In October 2016, Dzimbiri participated in the *Of Soul & Joy Photo Fest edition 2* in Thokoza.

UKUNGABIKHONA "ABSENCE"

My body of work is titled *Ukungabikhona*, which means "absence" in Zulu.

The word "ukungabikhona" can mean different things to different people. For me it signifies loss.

I lost my mother at the age of three. My only connection to her when I grew up was stories told by family and friends and a couple of photographs that helped me to get an understanding of the woman she was.

The point of departure for this project was my mother's personal belongings, which I randomly started to photograph.

During one of the shootings, my three-year-old niece ran into the room and started to play with some items that I had placed on the bed. At that very moment, I saw myself through my niece: a three-year-old girl that wanted to play dress-up with her mother's clothes and jewellery. My niece became my muse.

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Phumzile Dzimbiri joined the project in 2015.

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PHUMZILE DZIMBIRI

Ukungabikhona

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SANDILE ZULU

SANDILE ZULU
Church after Church















BIOGRAPHY

Sandile Zulu was born in 1995 in Kwazulu Natal, South Africa. He currently lives in Thokoza. In 2015 he was introduced to photography through the *Of Soul and Joy* project. Zulu participated in the *Of Soul & Joy Photo Fest edition 2* in Thokoza. This is where he exhibited his first project titled *Church after Church*.

CHURCH AFTER CHURCH

Church after Church is a project about one of the biggest churches in South Africa, called the Nazareth. I was fascinated by the church due to its importance to the believers and the myths surrounding it. Most of the members of the church come from “the hostel”, a cluster of dormitories that were built during the apartheid era predominantly for Zulu men who work in the mines of Johannesburg.

I had the privilege to assist at the celebration of “umgidi” in the church, a celebration of a young couple in the process of getting married. The future husband and wife come in their traditional attire. The women wear skirts which are made out of bead work on a cloth, boys put on a skirt called “ibheshu” which is made out of animal skin. Cow skin is most common, but leopard skin is chosen by those who hold an elevated social position. Men arrange themselves according to their clan names at the seats of the church.

Among the members of the assembly of the Nazareth church there is a strong belief that one should avoid cutting the hair and the beard. Hence, the men with long beards are easily recognised. This is generally considered as a symbol of holiness.

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Sandile Zulu joined the project in 2015.

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SANDILE ZULU

Church after Church

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SIBUSISO BHEKA

SIBUSISO BHEKA

Stop Nonsense















BIOGRAPHY

Sibusiso Bheka was born in 1997 in Thokoza, South Africa. He discovered photography in 2012 while in secondary school, with the *Of Soul and Joy* project.

Since 2015, he is studying photography at the Vaal University of Technology and has been awarded both a governmental scholarship and a Rubis Mécénat and Easigas grant.

In 2013, he was exhibited in the group show *In Thokoza* organised by Rubis Mécénat at the Ithuba Arts Gallery in Johannesburg. He also joined *Live* magazine as a part time photographer.

In 2014, his work was exhibited at the Addis Foto Fest in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

In 2015, his work participated in the group show *Free from my Happiness* at the Ghent International Photo Festival in Belgium then in 2016 in its itinerant form at the Perignem Studio in Beernem, Belgium and at the Johannesburg Art Gallery in South Africa.

The same year, he took part in the group show *Fresh Produce* organised by Assemblages and VANSAs at the Turbine Art Fair in Johannesburg.

In 2017, his photographic series *Stop Nonsense* was exhibited in the Pan-African exhibition at the 11th edition of the Rencontres de Bamako.

STOP NONSENSE

Stop Nonsense is a night photography documentary project in which I seek to document the changes brought by the wall built around my grandmother's house.

The term "Stop Nonsense", which is commonly used in South African townships, refers to any wall built with bricks and cement in the intention of providing security and avoiding conflicts between neighbours.

The project takes place in a small township called Phola Park located in Thokoza in the eastern suburbs of Johannesburg. It was established in the early 1950's under the apartheid government Native Urban Area Consolidation Act. The Township is a place with different ethnic groups, but is predominated by lower-class Xhosa people.

I started this project in late 2015 when the wall was built up. I was fascinated by the sudden change of the neighbourhood after the wall had been constructed. Things were not the same anymore, especially at night. The yard had a different atmosphere and during night-time a vibrant township existed beyond the borders of the wall.

In this body of work, I have been capturing current events in the township of Phola Park, but I have also tried to recreate artfully pictorial scenes of the events prior to the construction of the wall as well as the events that lead to its creation.

OF SOUL AND JOY PROJECT

Of Soul and Joy project is a lasting social art initiative undertaken in 2012 by Rubis Mécénat cultural fund in Thokoza, a township in the southeast of Johannesburg in South Africa. The project aims to expose the students of Buhlebuzile Secondary School to photography as a vocational skill and as a means of engagement for meaningful employment. It acts as a visual platform and a skills development programme through workshops led by renowned photographers.

Sibusiso Bheka joined the project in 2012.

The project was initiated in 2012 with Easigas, Rubis Group South African subsidiary, at Buhlebuzile Secondary School in Thokoza, South Africa.

SIBUSISO BHEKA

Stop Nonsense

Published on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of
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Thokoza, Johannesburg, South Africa

A Rubis Mécénat cultural fund project
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THEMBINKOSI HLATSHWAYO

THEMBINKOSI HLATSHWAYO

Betterment Promised















BIOGRAPHY

Theminkosi Hlatshwayo was born in 1993 in Soweto, Johannesburg, South Africa.

He was introduced to photography at the Vaal University of Technology where he was studying towards a National Diploma in photography. In 2016 he joined the *Of Soul and Joy* project to further pursue his skills in photography. In October 2016, Hlatshwayo exhibited his work at the *Of Soul & Joy Photo Fest edition 2* organised by Rubis Mécénat in Thokoza. This is where he exhibited his first project titled *Betterment Promise*. The same year, his work was also exhibited in the *Art Africa Fair* in Cape Town.

BETTERMENT PROMISED

We all are in pursuit of self-betterment, whether consciously or subconsciously. Although the reasons for and our approach to self-betterment vary, we are connected by a common desire for it in spite of our different ideologies, spiritualities, personas and journeys.

My curiosity led me to a building in my community that had intrigued me for a long time, but that my influenced perceptions had kept me somewhat oblivious towards for years. Misconceptions about the building were common among the people in my community. It was said that the building was used for the production of drugs, that it was an orphanage home and that it housed ex-convicts.

To feed my unquenched curiosity, I determined to search the facts from the people who congregated inside this developing architectural building. The residents, that were Muslims, had migrated from different parts of the country to congregate in my community. I discovered in my engagement with them that the building was actually an Islamic institution. I also discovered that its congregants were not so different from myself, nor was I different from them. I realized that we were all in the same pursuit of self-improvement.

Through the lenses of my camera, I further explored and captured the courtyard, the interior and the congregants of the institution as they reflect on their journey of promised betterment.

*Away from home
Coming from different parts of the country
Driven by different circumstances
They are there for self-betterment*

OF SOUL AND JOY PROJECT

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Theminkosi Hlatshwayo joined the project in 2016.

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THEMBINKOSI HLATSHWAYO

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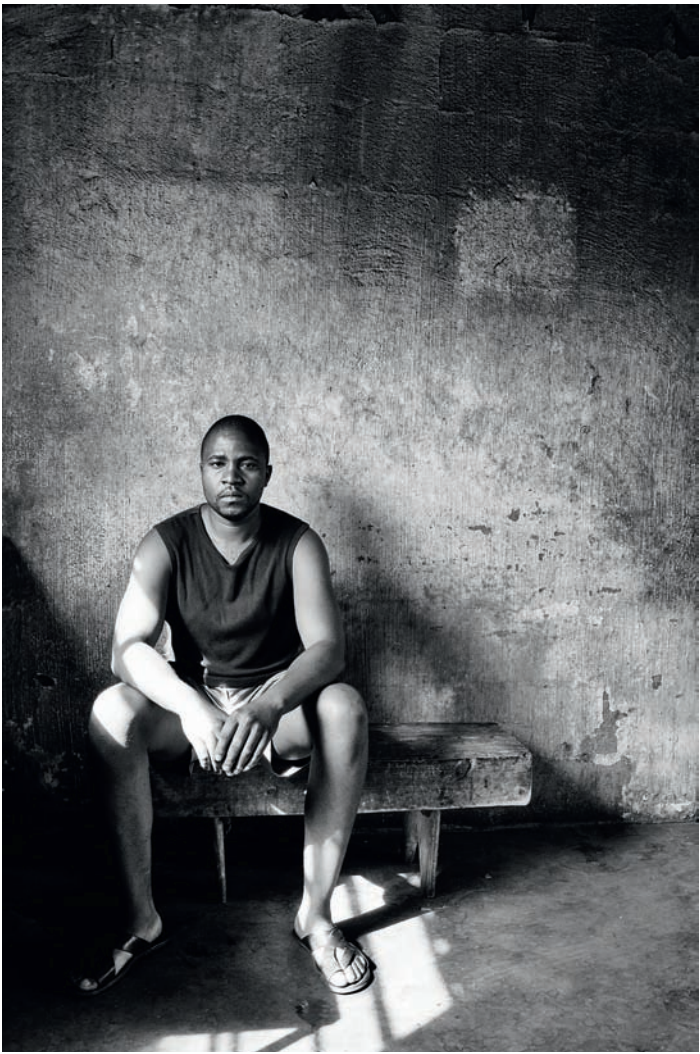




TSHEPISO MAZIBUKO

TSHEPISO MAZIBUKO

Gone and There

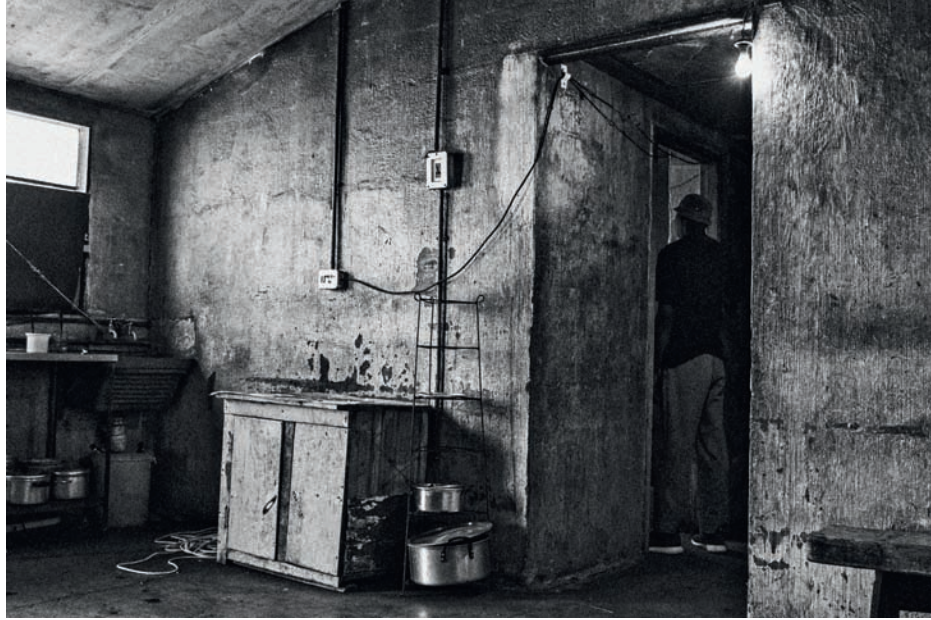














BIOGRAPHY

Tshepiso Mazibuko was born in 1995 in Thokoza, South Africa. She discovered photography in 2012 through the *Of Soul and Joy* project. Thanks to a grant awarded by the project, she entered the Advanced Programme at the Market Photo Workshop in 2015. Her work was exhibited in the collective exhibition *In Thokoza*, that was organized by Rubis Mécénat at the Ithuba Arts Gallery in Johannesburg in 2013.

In 2015 she participated in the exhibition *Free from my Happiness* organized by Rubis Mécénat as a part of the International Photo Festival in Ghent, Belgium. During 2016, the exhibition was further exposed in Perignem in Beernem, Belgium and at the Johannesburg Art Gallery in South Africa. The same year, she also participated in the group show *Fresh Produce* organized by Assemblages and VANSAs at the Turbine Art Fair in Johannesburg, South Africa. She graduated from the Market Photo Workshop in 2016. The same year, she was invited to present her work at the Addis Foto Fest in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where she received the first prize of the festival.

She was invited to the World Press Photo Festival 2017 in Amsterdam to give a closer presentation of her work and give a talk on the topic "The agency vs the presence of the photographer". She is the recipient of the 2017 Tierney Fellowship.

GONE AND THERE

Gone and There is a body of work exploring the aftermath of the political violence in my community Thokoza. The work is an interrogation about my township, which from the early 1990s until the first democratic elections in 1994 was subject to political violence. Approximately three thousand people died because of the conflict between the two leading political parties of the time, the Inkatha Freedom Party (*IFP*) and the African National Congress (ANC) that were fighting for political turf and supremacy. The work doesn't necessarily focus on the aftermath of the conflict, but is rather exploring themes such as separation, loss and trauma. It features a lot of landscape imagery since I have always been interested in how the outer landscape can manifest an inner trauma and how the representation of the place changes because of its history. Through my images, I intend to create a link between society, landscape and history.

OF SOUL AND JOY PROJECT

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Tshepiso Mazibuko joined the project in 2012.

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TSHEPISO MAZIBUKO

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YAMKELA MBANGA

YAMKELA MBANGA

People and Animals















BIOGRAPHY

Yamkela Mbanga was born in 1999 in Katlehong, Johannesburg, South Africa. He currently lives in Thokoza. In 2016, he was introduced to photography through the *Of Soul and Joy* project. In October 2016, Mbanga exhibited his work in the *Of Soul & Joy Photo Fest edition 2* in Thokoza. This is where he exhibited his first project titled *People and Animals*.

PEOPLE AND ANIMALS

The relationship between man and animal can be seen from different perspectives, both positive and negative. This relationship is often characterized by a certain ambiguity due to the many and varying reasons man interacts with the animals: consumption, company, wealth, spirituality and even wizardry. This project attempts to examine the interaction between domestic animals with their owners within the boundaries of our modern society.

My exploration takes place in my community which is Thokoza, a township located in South Africa.

In my community, most people own dogs for a variety of reasons such as hunting and security. Other animals that can be found in my community are sheep and cattle. These are slaughtered either for rites of passage such as weddings or funerals, or for ceremonies that observe ancestral worship.

Through my camera lens, I intend to capture the moments of interactions between the animals with their owners in my neighborhood.

OF SOUL AND JOY PROJECT

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Yamkela Mbanga joined the project in 2016.

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YAMKELA MBANGA

People and Animals

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